

School Dinners

The Council has agreed an increase of 15p for a two course school dinner. This will come into effect from September 2018 and will bring the price per meal in line with those charged by many other local authorities, as well as the Department for Education's funding for free meals, which is set at £2.30. In the last school year, HC3S, the County Council's award winning catering business, cooked and served over 14 million school meals in Hampshire's primary and secondary schools.

Energy Savings

Hampshire County Council is lighting the way to energy savings by replacing 75% of light fittings in its buildings with low energy LEDs. The light replacement project is part of a wider energy saving programme which has seen the County Council reduce its carbon emissions by 38.1% since 2010 – saving around £30 million in energy costs in total.

Switching to LED lighting makes perfect economic and environmental sense – reducing energy and maintenance costs by £240,000 a year, as well as lowering carbon emissions. The County Council are well on track to reaching their 40% carbon reduction target by 2025, with the ultimate aim of being carbon neutral by 2050.

The light replacement project is part of the County Council's £2.7 million investment in to its Energy and Carbon Management Programme, which also includes:

- Investigating the feasibility of converting its small vehicle fleet from diesel to electric on a phased basis
- Installation of approximately 40 new electric vehicle charging points at sites to be finalised, in addition to the 14 charging points already owned by the County Council

As well as saving around £30 million in energy costs since 2010, the County Council has also reduced its carbon tax charges by £330,000 since the start of the programme.

Hampshire Finances

You will know from my previous reports that, following a reduction in the Government's revenue support grant, inflation and the rising costs of social care, a total of £140 million savings have to be found by April 2019. Council is now considering proposals for achieving this and Government is being lobbied to allow charging per visit at household waste and recycling centres [HWRCs]. If we were able to charge, the local authority could raise up to £4 million and this may prevent some HWRCs from closing. Hampshire currently provides more HWRCs than comparable authorities with almost 85% of the population currently within five miles of an HWRC. 26 HWRCs are listed on the Council's website.

Big Pipe Scheme

After months of construction and deep excavations to install over 1.5km of pipe of up to 1.2 in diameter, Hampshire County Council has established a flood alleviation system in Hambleton. Work began in the summer of 2015 on the 'big pipe', to make Hambleton more resilient to the impact of flooding in the future, by keeping floodwater from the roads. One of the first Hampshire schemes put forward by the County Council for Government funding after the floods of 2013/2014, it was primarily financed by Hampshire County Council, with a significant contribution from national flood defence funding through the Environment Agency, and a further local contribution from Winchester City Council.

The bespoke scheme included the installation of a new underground pipe providing new floodwater culverts, pump points, road resurfacing and ditch clearance. Over the last few months, the scheme has been completed, with the road resurfaced and extra work to treat pavements to protect from water ingress, and the whole drainage system thoroughly cleansed. The scheme was constructed by Mildren Construction Ltd. Mildren are one of Hampshire County Council's framework contractors.

Stay Well and Warm this Winter

Keeping warm is important for everyone. It is essential for older people, the very young, and those with long-term medical conditions, who all need to take extra care to stay healthy. There are some simple things that people can do.

- Keep warm - heat your home to at least 18 degrees C (65F), if you can. If you can't heat all the rooms you use, heat the living room during the day and your bedroom just before you go to bed
- Eat well - food gives you energy, which helps to keep you warm, so try to have regular hot meals and hot drinks throughout the day
- Seek advice and help from a pharmacist for common problems such as coughs, colds, childhood fever, aches and pains, before they get too serious.
- Get a flu vaccination – ask your local pharmacist or your GP for more information
- Keep an eye on elderly or frail relatives, friends and neighbours
- Make sure you get your repeat prescriptions in good time

As the weather turns colder, some people and families will struggle to keep their homes warm. Hampshire County Council's Hitting the Cold Spots initiative can help. Now in its seventh year, this county-wide fuel poverty project offers advice and support to people who are having trouble staying warm during the winter, including home visits, help to access funding for boiler repairs and replacements, temporary heating, and small grants for winter fuel emergencies. Hampshire residents can also receive advice about tariff switching and how to be referred to other services for further help, including 'safe and well' visits and healthy living advice.

If you or someone you know is struggling to stay warm and well this winter, please contact an advisor on Freephone 0800 804 8601 (Monday – Friday, 9am to 5pm) or email staywarm@environmentcentre.com

If anyone is worried about an elderly neighbour or relative, they should call Hampshire County Council's Adult Services team on 0300 555 1386, during the week in working hours, (8.30 am to 5 pm, Monday to Thursday, 8.30 am to 4.30 pm Friday) or call 0300 555 1373 out of hours and on weekends and Bank Holidays.

A Career in Care

The County Council has teamed up with home-care providers to encourage more people to consider a career in care in order to help meet the growing demand. Care workers working for the County Council, or one of the care agencies it commissions, receive full training toward recognised qualifications, paid travel time between appointments, flexible working options and are paid at least the minimum wage, plus 20 per cent. To find out more visit hants.gov.uk/changelives

Ken Thornber

You may have read in the Press that the former Leader and Chairman of Hampshire County Council, Honorary Alderman Ken Thornber CBE passed away recently following illness. Ken Thornber served on Hampshire County Council for 40 years. He was Leader of the County Council from 1999 to 2013, and Chairman in 2013/14. In 1993 he was awarded the CBE for services to politics and the public. Ken served the people of Hampshire with diligence and commitment and was a hugely respected politician, both locally and nationally.

Funds for the Community

This is probably my last call for applications this financial year! I have a small budget for funding community related projects across the Division. For example, I have funded Lunch Clubs; Church group; trim trail for a school; music stands and theatre equipment for a school, playgroups; youth groups; Christmas party for village children; trips to the theatre for Golden Years; trips to the pantomime for young people, etc. The group must have a Treasurer and a bank account. To find out more visit <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/grants/county-councillor-grants.htm> and discuss the idea with me before making an application. Only one application per year per group. I look forward to hearing from you.

And finally Here's wishing you a Very Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year

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